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Occult Conceptions of Heaven

By L. E. BLOCHMAN

I

A Retrospection

THE early Hebraic views of Heaven were very crude and only gradually was a reasonable conception evolved. Other contemporary religions had a still grosser conception of the subject. While it is true that Socrates and Plato, a little later, developed a beautiful and believable philosophy on immortality and the heaven world, still it was so far from the current Grecian thought, that Socrates was condemned to death for controverting the mythological belief of the masses.

Credulity only gradually gave way to philosophy and in the Jewish nation it was in the first century B.C. around the Hillel period, before any philosophical thought took root. With this awakening, there followed in the next century the beginning of the talmudical period. It constituted several centuries of both philosophical and doctrinal teachings; and though the basis was religious, the interpretation was both restricted and at times quite broad. Some philosophy was absorbed from outside sources as well, which the previous narrow isolation could not have brought to fruition. In the later centuries the mystical movements became partly incorporated into the current literal biblicalism. The Cabbalistic trend was a still further metaphysical movement. In a measure similar developments took place in other religious bodies, in fact we must concede that other faiths were more versatile than the Jewish, when it was a matter of philosophy or metaphysics.

II

A More Rational View of the Hereafter

We may now enter into what may be termed the occult conception of heaven, an independent metaphysical viewpoint, the Cabala merely touches the subject. It may more properly be designated as part of modern occult philosophy. Not all of modern investigations have been given over to science and economics. Metaphysics and occultism are receiving due attention in this intensely industrial world. In this classification is included Psychological Re-

search, Theosophy, specific occult investigations, Hindoo philosophy and related subjects.

In this more rational conception of the Hereafter, the soul at leaving its body at death is not immediately rewarded or punished. It is attracted to its appropriate localization. If the spirit is dense, crude or earth-bound, it is dazed on making the transition and it remains in the outer astral or earth plane. In this sleepy or dreamy state it may not at first realize that it has left the earth plane. Finally it does awaken to be met by others of its own type who are to guide it. There is no sharp deviation as a class between the good and the bad, between the mediocre and the advanced or radiant spirit. There are gradations of all kinds between souls that have passed out as there are between souls incarnate. It cannot be too often repeated that the transition of death does not suddenly change the status of the soul. It changes its sphere of activities, its happiness or unhappiness becomes accentuated on being relieved of the body, but it is not nobler or more ignoble for the transition. There is a marked difference, however, between souls on either this plane or the other, the extremes are observable all around us.

Already in the Bible we are told of men that walked with God, as an Elijah, whose spirit was so radiant that it passed out in a cloud of glory. In the religious and even secular history of both Hebrews and Christians we have wonderful death scenes of saints and mystics. The Jewish people also have records of their saints in all periods of their history. Balzac, the novelist, describes in *Seraphita* the ascension of a pure spirit that is more vivid and transcendent than that of Elijah or of John of Patmos. Mabel Collins in her book, "The Awakening," refers briefly to the glorious transition of some radiant souls of our own day; other writers add their testimony as well. The transition between this life and the next is one of the greatest proofs of immortality; but there is still another which is more specifically corroborative of the closeness of the two worlds, the temporary passage of the spirit out of the body during earth life.

III

Most Souls Are of a Passive Nature

Most persons are negative or passive during their lifetime, especially does this apply to the great mass of humanity the world over. The cultured or those with trained minds are in the minority. Occult and metaphysical philosophy does not assume that these more or less passive and ignorant masses are doomed to punishment in the next sphere, on the other hand, their heavy spirits do not fit them for a paradise. Their spirits therefore remain passive or dazed for some time until gradually a slow betterment ensues. The ancient Greeks and Romans also believed that the souls of the masses pass into Hades immediately after death—a passive state neither of happiness or of misery. This is the vestibule of the next existence. The belief as to the future of the soul that the Romans and the Grecians held does not thus differ radically from that of the Christians or even Hebrews except as to mere nomenclature. The intuitions of mankind at a certain level of development are quite alike,

though we unjustifiably call others heathen, in a sense of lower worth.

IV

A Specific Outer Heaven

It has remained for modern investigators, for instance Sinnett of the Theosophical school, to tell us that by natural gravitation each great faith is localized to a specific astral plane in the other existence. Each specific group thus unites its votaries to its own; this would also explain the great differences in the occasional visions of the dying of divergent beliefs. The united beliefs of any group that has existed for ages is a strong and powerful battery of psychical force and according to occult belief the influence reaches across from this plane to the next. The Cabala also affirms this interrelation of spheres. This does not imply that a highly developed spirit, after some lapse of time, may not transcend these outer planes and enter into the more universal heaven. We should never berate or disparage any faith or its votaries. There is a brotherhood in mankind that is based on worthiness far stronger than the separateness of sectarianism, particularly of the past.

Philo Judaeus (20 B. C. = 40 A. D.)

A Biographical Sketch by Rabbi Abba I. Krim, B. H. L., M. A.
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FROM the wealth of literature of the Jewish diaspora of the Hellenistic period, Philo is the only personality of whom we can form a clear idea from his works. Descended from a distinguished house, possessing a comprehensive knowledge of all sciences, a man of deepest moral seriousness, in esteem among his fellow citizens, he combined with his Greek education and learning, a faithful and inspired devotion to the Jewish faith to which he was born and in which he was brought up. In his thoughts and emotions both Hellenism and Hebraism were closely fused. He was firmly convinced that the teachings of Judaism stood in harmony with Greek philosophy. To prove this agreement and to defend the eternal truths and the lofty ethical content of Judaism, he devoted all his zeal.

We know little of his life. From Josephus we know that he was a brother of Alexander the Alabarah. This fact proves that he belonged to one of the noblest and most distin-

guished Jewish families in Alexandria. Philo himself speaks very seldom about himself. We know of 2 journeys of his, which are mentioned in his works.

The first journey was a visit to Jerusalem "to offer up prayers and sacrifices in the temple," according to Jewish custom. This was probably before 38 A. D.

About January, 40 A. D., Philo, then about 60 years old, was chosen as the head of an embassy of 5 to plead the cause of the Alexandrian Jews before the emperor Caligula, against the Greeks of Alexandria, who, under Governor Flaccus, made a massacre upon the Jews during which the Greek mob committed terrible atrocities upon the Jewish populations. The Greeks also sent an embassy. At the head of their embassy stood, as Josephus reports, the grammarian Apion. Philo later wrote a detailed report of his embassy in 5 books, of which only parts are preserved to us. In his

The Association of Hebrew Theosophists

Its Ideals and Objects

"THEOSOPHY"—literally Divine Wisdom—(Theos Sophia) is a name that, since the third century, A. D., has been used in the West to cover various schools of religious philosophy which all unite in the fundamental conception that man, in his innermost nature, is a spiritual being, one in essence with the Universal Spirit manifested in and through the universe.

An understanding of the many problems of life in the light of such a conception has been the goal of sages and mystics belonging to every Faith throughout the ages.

Repeated references to the existence of a "Hidden Wisdom"—Hachmah Nistarah—occur in the Talmud, as well as to Initiates, or "The Knowers of the Secret Wisdom"—Yode Hen.

Many of their speculations and doctrines eventually became embodied in the Zoharic and later Kabbalistic literature. This is a literature of theosophy as it was comprehended and formulated by Jews some centuries ago.

The Immanence of God

To the theosophist the whole world appears as a manifestation of the Divine Life that is recognizable in ones fellow beings, in the beauty, design, and majesty of nature. But the mystery of that Divine Life could only be understood by seeking and experiencing its presence within one's own soul. Thus does the theosophist seek to analyze his own consciousness, with a view to discovering the Real and permanent Self, the God within his own being, and the happiness and freedom in which all can share.

An increasing number of thinking men and women are seeking for a philosophy that will render life intelligible, and give to them a light by which to solve their individual, social, international, and racial problems. There is, moreover, a growing intuition that, somewhere within human reach, there lies the Truth: that it is not too audacious a quest to inquire into the meaning of the great Journey of life, any more than it would be for passengers on a ship to consider where they had come from, what it was that induced them to commence their journey, and how best they might each assist in successfully and speedily fulfilling their mission.

Theosophy is the basis of all religion and it reveals the fact that all faiths are rooted in the one truth, and that it is quite unnecessary to change faiths in order to learn the purpose of life and to find lasting happiness. Truth cannot be held exclusively by anyone. The Association of Hebrew Theosophists exists for the purpose of bringing out the fulness of joy and peace that Judaism holds for the Jew, and for the world, through the Jew. The Association was founded in 1925 by Jewish mem-

bers of the Theosophical Society. The A. H. T. has three definite objects along which it works:

First—To study Judaism in the light of Theosophy and Theosophy in the light of Judaism.

Second—To spread Theosophical Teachings among the Jews.

Third — To undertake any other activity which could aid in the realization of the objects of the Association.

Members of the Association of Hebrew Theosophists may or may not hold membership in the Theosophical Society. There are only two requirements in the A. H. T.

First—the acceptance of Universal Brotherhood without distinction of race or creed.

Second—Absolute tolerance to every person's religious opinion, of members or non-members.

There are two classes of membership in the A. H. T., Active and Associate. Non-Jews who may wish to join the A. H. T. can enter as associate members.

Jews and the Theosophical Society

As the Theosophical Society aims to help the world by bringing to light the great truths of life, it welcomes to its ranks people of every race and religion who may offer their distinctive gifts to the ideals of the Society, and because of the ideal spirit of mutual appreciation among the members and groups everyone is enriched from contact with the other. A Jew is welcomed in the T. S. because he is a Jew, and because by aiming to live an ideal Jewish life he can help his fellow men better than if he were not certain of his Judaism. Members of the Theosophical Society are not bound by a common Faith. That which alone binds them is a common aspiration for Truth, and a desire to remove antagonism and intolerance.

"There is no religion higher than truth," is the motto of the Society. Its objects are:

1. To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color.

2. To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science.

3. To investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man.

The Theosophical Society was formed in 1875, and is now spread all over the world. Dr. Annie Besant is the International President.

Theosophy does not ask you to leave your religion, but to live it. It calls for the recognition of the great fact of the Brotherhood of Man, and the Theosophical Society exists for the purpose of bringing together, in a spirit of goodwill, men and women of every shade of

opinion. The belief in this basic principle of Brotherhood is the only thing to which each must subscribe.

The Association of Hebrew Theosophists is in harmony with the aims of the Theosophical Society. It is the purpose of the Association to be a channel for a free and independent Jewish expression, that is discerned with heart and mind. It encourages co-ordination with the rest of the world through service, sympathy and understanding, knowing that mere passiveness or rejection cannot accomplish anything. There is no greater happiness than to be able to see the best side of everyone—that is the joy of life.

Nothing else can plant love where there is hate, and put an end to strife and pain, nor is the purpose of life revealed in any other manner; for in Unity alone is peace; the peace of the one eternal Self of all humanity. Surely

it must be obvious (and it is a fact to many) that life is more than a matter "from cradle to grave," and that true happiness depends on something vaster than the comforts and necessities of one life on earth.

What history can be more glorious? What Judaism can be more sacred? What Jewishness can be more beautiful than to strive to be a perfect part in the one Divine plan of evolution; in the unity of spirit wherein there is strength and blessing.

The A. H. T. is not beset with any agencies that bind or limit anyone. As an organization it promulgates the realization of peace and happiness in the light of Truth, and for which every member is free to search in his or her own way.

Further information may be had from those listed in the A. H. T. Directory.

A. H. T. Directory

The International Committee

President—Mr. Gaston Polak, 5 Rue de Zoëdique, Brussels, Belgium.

Secretary—Mr. S. I. Heiman, Leicester College of Arts and Crafts, Leicester, England.

Treasurer—Mr. J. M. Perez, P. O. Box 679, Cairo, Egypt.

National Representatives

America—Mr. Henry C. Samuels, Route 1, Box 830-B, Seattle, U. S. A.

Austria—Mr. Stephen Polak, Florianigasse, 60 Vienna VIII.

Belgium—(International president).

Bulgaria — Mr. M. Cohen, Rue Dunav 16, Sophia.

Czechoslovakia — Mr. Oscar Beer, Warnsdorf 11/137.

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England — (Represented by International Secretary.)

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Hungary — Mrs. Elizabeth Kortesz, Vorosmartzgasse 20, Budapest.

India—Mr. Reuben Ani, P. O. Box 231, Bombay, Adyar, Madras, India. Mr. S. S. Cohen.

Italy — Mrs. Pia Muller, Via Montfort 10, Trieste.

Poland — Mr. Steinberg, Pietrkowska ul. A. 199. m. 12, Lodz.

Romania—Mrs. Tuna Schoenberg.

For correspondents in other countries address the International Secretary.

Subscription of The Jewish Theosophist is open to the public everywhere. The rate is \$1.00 (one dollar) a year, post free.

A. H. T. Groups

Karachi—Center A. H. T. For information of classes and other activities, address Mr. L. Solomon, I. A. S. C., near Star Cinema, Bunder Road, Karachi, India.

London, England—The Jewish lodge of the Theosophical Society meets every Sunday evening, 7:30, at 51 Lancaster Gate, W. 2. For information of other activities, address Mr. S. I. Heiman, 67 The Avenue, Southampton.

New York Group—Mr. Morris Rosenbaum, president, 1582 Broadway, Brooklyn, New York; Mrs. Jennie Wilson, secretary, 4917 39th Avenue, Long Island, New York. The group meets in the Federation Building, New York. For further information address the President or the secretary.

Complete information of group activities are lacking at the present time as the groups are in the process of organization. The groups named conduct interesting meetings to which the public is invited, and they are usually addressed by leading students in Jewry.

The A. H. T. in America

There are three kinds of membership in the American section A. H. T., and they are designated to suit the individual's interest: 1. Active membership; 2. Helpers; 3. Friends. There are no dues for helpers and friends save their subscription to The Jewish Theosophist. Active members pay \$1.00 a year in addition to their subscription. Non-Jews are invited to co-operate as helpers and friends. Further information in regard to the A. H. T. may be had from any of the addresses given in the A. H. T. directory. Subscription to The Jewish Theosophist is open to the public; \$1.00 a year, including postage.

The Association of Hebrew Theosophist (American Section)

Route 1, Box 830-B Seattle, U. S. A.

"O hidden life vibrant in every atom;
O hidden light! shining in every creature;
O hidden love! embracing all in oneness,
May each who feels himself as one with Thee,
Know he is also one with every other."